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Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 03991 061255Z

44
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 CU-04 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 CPR-02 DRC-01

/087 W
---------- 050870
R 061155Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2156

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, CM, US
SUBJECT: RETURN OF AFO-A-KOM

REF: A) YAOUNDE 3934, B) YAOUNDE 3959, C) YAOUNDE 3986

1. SUMMARY. AFTER SEVERAL DAYS' CONFUSION RESULTING FROM GURC PREOCCUPATION WITH LCBC VISITING CHIEFS OF STATE COMPOUNDED BY USUAL INABILITY FOCUS ON ISSUE AND COORDINATE ACTION PRIOR TO 11TH HOUR, IT NOW APPEARS GURC HAS DECIDED RETURN STATUE TO KINGDOM KOM. BUT IT UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS WILL HAPPEN BY END NEXT WEEK--WHICH WOULD PERMIT VISITING AMERICAN DELEGATION AND JOURNALISTS TO ACCOMPANY--OR SOMETIME LATER. AMERICAN VISITORS HAVE BEEN VERY UNHAPPY WITH EARLIER INDICATIONS THAT NO DECISIONS EVEN TAKEN RE EVENTUAL RETURN. THEY NOW HAPPIER, BUT MAY BE OVER OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TIMING AND WILL INEVITABLY BE INTENSELY DISSAPOINTED AND BITTER IF RETURN IS DELAYED BEYOND NEXT WEEK. END SUMMARY

2. REFTEL (A) REPORTED LAST-MINUTE PRE-ARRIVAL DEVELOPMENT, I.E., GURC DECISION KEEP STATUE "FOR TIME BEING" IN YAOUNDE AND APPARENTLY INTENTIONAL VAGUENESS ABOUT WHETHER STATUE EVENTUALLY TO BE RETURNED TO KOM. REFTELS (B) AND (C) ARE UNCLASSIFIED USINFO'S REPORTING CIRCUMSTANCES OF STATUE'S RETURN TO CAMEROON AND CEREMONIAL HANDLING OVER BY PRIVATE AMERICAN BENEFACTORS TO
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GURC (EVEN THOUGH ACTUAL HANDOVER PREVIOUSLY DONE IN U.S.-

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STATE 235660).

3. AS ANTICIPATED, ACCOMPANYING AMERICANS WERE LESS THAN PLEASED AT SITUATION ON ARRIVAL. JOURNALISTS UNHAPPY AT LOSS OF KEY FOCUS FOR PICTORAL STORIES--ACTUAL RETURN TO KOM KINGDOM AND JOYOUS CEREMONIES THERE. DELEGATION (GUSSMAN/ ROBBINS/SPICELY) WERE SIMILARLY AND UNDERSTANDABLY UNHAPPY THAT WAY NOT CLEAR FOR IMMEDIATE HAPPY ENDING WHILE THEY PRESENT TO WITNESS IT IN LAIKOM. GUSSMAN WAS ESPECIALLY IRATE OVER WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS POSSIBLE CONTRAVENTION OF ARRANGEMENTS NEGOTIATED WITH DEALER FROM WHOM STATUE BOUTHT AND WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS GURC INTENTION AS CONVEYED THRU ITS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON--I.E., THAT STATUE BEING RETURNED TO KOM PEOPLE. N.Y. TIMES REPORTER TOM JOHNSON WAS PLANNING STORY REFLECTING DELEGATION'S DISAPPOINTMENT AT INABILITY SEE THROUGH ITS COMMITMENT TO DELIVER STATUE TO KOM PEOPLE.

4. EMBASSY DID ITS BEST TO MAKE SURE VARIOUS AMERICANS UNDERSTOOD THAT SHORT-RUN GURC DECISION, AS WE HAD HEARD IT, DID NOT PRECLUDE STATUE'S LATER FTURN TO LAIKOM. WE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WITH ITS CURRENT ABSORPTION BY LCBC CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING, GURC WAS NOT IN POSITION FOCUS ON DECISIONS RE STATUE AT MOMENT, THOUGH ITS CONSIDERATION SO FAR HAD OBVIOUSLY SHOWN ATTITUDE THAT STATUE PART OF CULTURAL PATRIMONY OF ENTIRE CAMEROON NATION (AS REFLECTION GOVERNMENT'S NATURAL PRIMARY CONCERN FOR PROMOTING NATIONAL UNITY).

5. SITUATION EVOLVED FAVORABLY YESTERDAY (DECEMBER 5) AS KEY FIGURES IN GURC STARTED TO HAVE TIME COORDINATE THOUGHTS RE STATUE AFTER LCBC CHIEFS OF STATE LEFT AND PERHAPS AS PRESSURES FELT FROM DISCONTENT ON PART BOTH AMERICAN VISITORS AND KOM PEOPLE. MINISTER INFO AND CULTURE TOLD AMBASSADOR STATUE WOULD BE RETURNED TO KOM, BUT WOULD NOT BE PINNED DOWN ON TIMING PROBABLY BECAUSE NO DECISION YET ARRIVED AT. EX-WEST CAMEROON POLITICAL LEADER JUA (A KOM) TOLD VISITING AMERICANS MINISTER HAD TOLD HIM THAT STATUE WOULD BE RETURNED TO KOM FOR ANNUAL DECEMBER 14 TRIBAL CEREMONIES THERE. (JUA MAY HAVE INJECTED SOME WISHFUL THINKING OF PURPOSEFIS DISTORTION HERE.) IF STATUE IS RETURNED TO KOM BY THAT DATE, GUSSMAN
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INTENDS TO STAY ON TO ACCOMPANY AND ATTEND FESTIVITIES. SOME, IF NOT ALL, JOURNALISTS WILL ALSO STAY.

6. VISITING DELEGATION HAS APPOINTMENTS TODAY WITH BOTH MINISTER AND SECGEN MIN INFO AND CULTURE. DELEGATION WILL BE RECEIVED TOMORROW BY PRESIDENT AHIDJO. WE ASSUME VISITORS WILL EMERGE FROM THOSE MEETINGS WITH CLARIFICATION ONE WAY OR OTHER ABOUT PLANS FOR RETURN OF STATUE TO KINGDOM KOM.

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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 06 DEC 1973
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Drafter: n/a
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